ACTION EUR-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 AMAD-00 INL-00 PDI-00 UTED-00 TEDE-00
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UNCLAS VIENNA 003539

DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR LISBETH KEEFE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KPAO, AU, OPRC

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: NOVEMBER 03, 2005

Austrian Railways Threatening Strikes
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1. All Austrian media continue to report on the Union of Railway Employees, which has threatened OeBB strikes, should any changes be made to the present employment laws in order to make it easier to fire employees. The Austrian Unions Association OeGB has said it supports the strike threats. OeGB boss Fritz Verzetnitsch told ORF radio that such actions were "justified" should the government change the laws so that railway employees are no longer protected from being fired. Existing agreements "have to be met to the last detail," he stressed, and added he is "not prepared to accept it if the government goes back on its word." Verzetnitsch did not rule out that a decision in favor of industrial action might be taken at the meeting of the OeGB federal leadership today.

Early Retirement for Heavy Laborers Under Fire

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ARCHIE M BOLSTER
DATE/CASE ID: 27 FEB 2009 200706444

2. The Austrian Workers Association (OEAAB) which is connected to the OeVP has spoken out against the early retirement pension provision for heavy labor due to go into effect in 2007 because the term "heavy labor" has yet to be defined, all Austrian media report. A preliminary list of jobs that have been categorized over the years as heavy labor contains 89 jobs. According to centrist daily "Die Presse," experts have been warning for months that it is practically impossible to provide a foolproof definition of heavy labor, and that the provision will lead to even more bureaucracy. Veit Sorger, president of the Industrialists Association, favors continuing the existing so-called "blue-collar" provision until 2015. OeVP party leaders say they will wait for further developments.

BZOe Troubles
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3. Following the junior coalition party's defeat in two provincial elections, the BZOe is struggling to determine its future course. According to mass-circulation daily "Kurier," the party is desperately trying to come up with a program and a list of top representatives, in order to prevent being voted off the Austrian political island in the 2006 general elections. According to BZOe spokesperson Uwe Scheuch, the party is to "position itself clearly with regard to its personnel and program within the next weeks." Meanwhile, confusion continues, writes ORF online, with party members being left in the dark regarding a party executive meeting BZOe leader Joerg Haider claimed he scheduled for this week.

Hundreds Demonstrated Against Iran in Vienna
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4. Mass-circulation tabloid "Kronen Zeitung" reports on a demonstration in front of the Iranian Embassy in Vienna on Wednesday evening in which hundreds of people participated. The demonstration was aimed against the erratic anti-Israel tirades of Iran's President Ahmadinejad, who had called for "wiping Israel off the map." Among the speakers were Chief Rabbi Eisenberg and the President of the Austrian Jewish Community Ariel Muzicant. In the meantime, Iran is planning to replace about 20 of its ambassadors that Ahmadinejad considers too liberal, according to the tabloid.

EU Criticism of Ankara's Lack of Reform Efforts Expected

5. Austrian media cover the progress report of the EU Commission due to be published next week and which is said to criticize Turkey for lagging behind in its reform efforts, especially in the areas of freedom of the press, human rights, rights of minorities and religious freedom, writes mass-circulation daily "Kurier." Dutch politician Camiel Eurlings, whom the European Parliament in Strassbourg

has put in charge of reporting on Turkey, demands "clarity" from the EU Commission in its negotiations with the membership candidate. There have to be "clear deadlines" as to the implementation of political reforms, centrist daily "Die Presse" quotes Eurlings as saying. The EU politician also points out areas where Ankara has sent positive signals: The reform of criminal law has been passed and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan allowed the international Armenian conference in the summer - despite prohibition through a court. Also, Eurlings praised Erdogan for his outreach efforts to the Kurds - giving rise to the hope that Ankara is considering a new approach to the Kurdish problem, according to the "Presse."

Israel Wants EU at Gaza Border
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6. headlines liberal daily "Der Standard" in reference to an Israeli demand for an active EU role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the first time, Israel is willing to place its border with Egypt under EU control. The border became a problem zone as a consequence of the inability of Israelis, Palestinians, and Egyptians to agree on control modalities before the Israeli withdrawal. Therefore, the checkpoint at Rafah has been closed for weeks. The Israelis, formerly opposed to any inclusion of third countries into a solution of the border problem, are now willing to give considerable authority to the EU - the Palestinians, however, insist they are in charge now and as such responsible for the security of the border, writes the "Standard."

NATO Secretary General Scheffer in Vienna
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7. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer will be in Vienna today for a one-day working visit. In the morning, he will speak at the Permanent Council of the Organization for

Security and Cooperation in Europe on NATO's relationship with the OSCE and international organizations in general, ORF online reports. He is also expected to talk about potential OSCE missions in the Balkans and in Afghanistan. Later, Scheffer will meet with Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel to discuss the Alliance's ties with the EU, and Austria's cooperation with NATO within the Partnership for Peace initiative. In the afternoon, the Secretary General will give a lecture at Vienna's Diplomatic Academy.

Newspaper: CIA Holds Terror Suspects in Secret Prisons

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8. Sourcing US daily "Washington Post," ORF online news reported on November 2 that the CIA has allegedly been hiding high-ranking terrorist suspects at a covert prison compound in Eastern Europe. Potential sites of the facilities include Thailand, Afghanistan and "several democracies in Eastern Europe," according to U.S. and foreign officials, ORF online quotes from the "Washington Post."

The US daily did not publish the names of the Eastern European countries involved in program, at the request of senior US officials. They argued that the disclosure might make the prisons targets of possible terrorist retaliation.

On November 3, ORF online continues to report on these so-called "black sites," and liberal daily "Der Standard" in a front-page report writes that about one hundred suspects, among them high-ranking al Qaeda members, are said to be held at the facilities.

Semi-official daily "Wiener Zeitung," mass-circulation provincial daily "Kleine Zeitung," mass-circulation daily "Kurier" and centrist daily "Die Presse" also reported on the issue.

Riots Fuel Power Struggle in Paris

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9. All Austrian media continue to report on the unrest in Paris, where police have battled with rioting youth for a seventh night in a row in immigrant communities. According to Austrian radio early morning news "Morgenjournal," two elementary schools, a post office and a shopping center were damaged, and a large car showroom set ablaze in the

impoverished neighborhoods. The Prime Minister and Interior Minister have delayed trips abroad to try to calm the unrest. Centrist daily "Die Presse" reports on its front

page that the events have highlighted the bitter rivalry between Premier Dominique de Villepin and Interior Minister Nicholas Sarkozy ahead of 2007 presidential elections, particularly after Sarkozy called the protesting youths "rabble."

Sightseeing Tour Instead of Inspections

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10. headlines centrist daily "Die Presse," and publishes an interview with UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Manfred Nowak on the decision of a group of UN human rights investigators to reject an invitation to visit the Guantanamo Bay prison camp unless they are allowed to interview detainees. US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said earlier this week he will not allow the UN representatives to meet with them. In an interview with the "Presse," Nowak explained the group "cannot accept Rumsfeld's conditions, as they would contradict our guidelines for such fact-finding missions." It would be to the disadvantage of the US, should the UN's inspection at Guantanamo be cancelled, Nowak argues: In that case, he would have to rate as facts the allegations of inhuman treatment and torture at the prison camp. Washington would deprive itself of the opportunity to counter the allegations. "Lack of cooperation has never helped any country," Nowak noted.

Democrats Request Secret Senate Meeting

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11. ORF radio evening news on November 2 and liberal daily "Der Standard" report on the stepping-up of efforts on the part of US Democrats to bring to light all the details surrounding the so-called "Plamegate" affair in which close White House aides are allegedly implicated. The affair has repercussions for the President, as ORF Washington correspondent Fabio Polly points out: "In the US, the miserable approval rates for President Bush have generated domestic consequences. The Democratic opposition feels the tailwind in its resistance against the governing Republicans - even in areas formerly obscured by a common patriotism that bridged party divides. The times of consensus in foreign policy matters appear to be over - especially since Bush has yielded to the extreme right with his latest nominations and incensed the Democrats."
Phillips

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